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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE 5857

RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS IMMEDIATE 8795

RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN IMMEDIATE 4111

RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME IMMEDIATE 6197

RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE 6460

RUEHKU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT IMMEDIATE 3678

RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA IMMEDIATE 9265

RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH IMMEDIATE 7235

RUEHAD/AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI IMMEDIATE 0883

RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 7206

RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 0565

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA IMMEDIATE 4174

RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE 1687

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS IMMEDIATE

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RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE 0422

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 STATE 049259

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/08/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [LE](#)

SUBJECT: LEBANON NEEDS ITS FRIENDS

REF: A. BEIRUT 618

[1](#)B. BEIRUT 627

[1](#)C. BEIRUT 632

[1](#)D. BEIRUT 634

Classified By: NEA A/S David Welch for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request. Please see paragraph 3 below. Posts should draw from the background in paras 5-7 below when making this demarche.

SUMMARY

[1](#)2. (SBU) Department requests posts communicate our assessment of the situation in Lebanon and ask that the "friends of Lebanon" (FOL) make good on their commitment to support the legitimate Lebanese government.

OBJECTIVES

[1](#)3. (SBU) Posts should pursue the following objectives with senior interlocutors (Embassy Cairo should approach both Egyptian government and Arab League representatives):

-- (SBU) Urge immediate diplomatic support for the legitimate Lebanese government. We are deeply concerned by the situation in Lebanon, where Hizballah is using intimidation and violence to challenge the authority of the Lebanese government. We view the current situation as a serious threat to the sovereignty and security of Lebanon.

-- (SBU) Request the "friends of Lebanon" (FOL) make good on their "strong commitment to supporting the legitimate Lebanese government and the democratic institutions of the country" expressed in a statement on the margins of the April 22 Iraq Neighbors ministerial in Kuwait.

-- (SBU) Urge them to join us in sending strong public and private messages that (1) distinguish between the legitimate authority of the Lebanese government and illegitimate resort to violence by Hizballah and its allies, (2) stress the

deleterious social and economic effects for all Lebanese of the demonstrations and spreading clashes, (3) urge all sides to cease fire and withdraw from the streets, (4) hold Hizballah and its allies responsible for the outcome of their chosen path of confrontation, and (5) condemn Iran and Syria for their continued interference in Lebanon and provision of lethal support to Hizballah in violation of UNSCRs 1559 and 1701.

-- (C/REL TURKEY) For Embassy Ankara: Strongly urge the Turkish government to inveigh upon the Syrian government to restrain its allies in Lebanon. We will hold Syria responsible for the actions of its allies, given Syrian VP Sharaa's public acknowledgment that Syria holds significant influence in Lebanon. Reiterate our oft-stated concerns about Iran's transshipment of weapons through Turkey to Syria for Hizballah, noting that these weapons have now been turned against the Lebanese people and their elected government.

-- (C/REL RUSSIA) For Embassy Moscow: Note that, while Russia was not a party to the FOL statement, the United States hopes to work closely with the Russian government to resolve the crisis in Lebanon. Seek Russia's intervention with the Syrian government and its allies in Lebanon to urge immediate de-escalation. Note that we remain deeply concerned that Russian weapons supplied to Syria have ended up in Hizballah's hands and are now being turned against Lebanese civilians. Repeat previous requests that Russia

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cease transfers of easily proliferable weapons to Syria.

REPORTING DEADLINE

14. (U) Posts should report results by cable to Lebanon desk officer Matthew Irwin by local COB Friday, May 9.

BACKGROUND

15. (SBU) Lebanon is once again on the brink. The Hizballah-led opposition has confronted Lebanon's legitimate government in an effort to maintain political unaccountability and protect its state-within-a-state. On May 6 the Lebanese cabinet declared Hizballah's internal communications network and surveillance of Beirut International Airport illegal and resolved to root out these threats to government authority and internal security (ref A). On May 7 Hizballah and its opposition allies responded with demonstrations, scattered violence, and threats of escalation if the government did not withdraw its decisions (ref B). As demonstrations continued on May 8, Hizballah SYG Nasrallah called the government decisions "a declaration of war" in a belligerent public speech. The Lebanese government has publicly declared it will stand firm, but is privately seeking strong international backing (ref C). As of the evening of May 8, clashes between pro-government and Hizballah-led opposition forces were spreading throughout Beirut (ref D).

16. (SBU) We believe that international diplomatic action could tip the balance in the escalating confrontation between the democratically-elected Lebanese government and the Hizballah-led opposition. Hizballah and the opposition have thrown down the gauntlet, challenging the government's right to govern. By paralyzing Beirut, particularly its international airport, in pursuit of a narrow political agenda, Hizballah has shed the pretext of being a Lebanese entity working on behalf of Lebanon. Furthermore, Hizballah has turned its weapons against its fellow Lebanese, belying Hizballah's claims to need the weapons to resist external aggression. Hizballah's chosen path threatens the authority of the Lebanese government, sovereignty of the Lebanese state, and security of the Lebanese people.

¶7. (C) Lebanese government majority leader Saad Hariri is in contact with the Turkish and Russian governments to request their help pressing Syria to reign in its allies in Lebanon. Meanwhile, we are in contact via Washington and Embassy Beirut with Lebanese and regional political leaders. However, Hizballah and its allies are working to portray the Lebanese government's exercise of its legitimate authority as an "American project to undermine the resistance." The Lebanese government needs broader and more vocal international support to strengthen its hand.

POINT OF CONTACT

¶8. (U) Please contact Lebanon desk officer Matthew Irwin for any necessary further background information.

¶9. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.
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